

Message from the Harbormaster

March 11, 2009

We were visited by the US Army Corps of Engineers last week who invited the public to comment on the Navigational Study that is ongoing in Passage Canal in the Whittier area. Many of our customers will remember getting a survey mailed to them with the moorage billing last spring. The data that is being compiled from that survey, information gathered in these public hearings and comments and suggestions collected from the marina offices and archives are beginning to produce a picture of what a marina and associated uplands may look like at the Head of Passage Canal.

For years many ideas have come and gone, studies have been done and still, aside from the highly visible tank farm, no development has occurred to date. That does not mean that nothing has happened. The unsightly barge wreck has been removed, the site has been topographically and hydrographically surveyed and an RFP for Upland Engineering Design is currently on the street. So what does all this mean if nothing appears to have changed yet? Quite a bit is the answer. Great development projects must have plenty of thought, planning and public participation to be successful. We often hear that Whittier is mostly just that, all planning and no development. However, the stakeholder participants in this effort have brought this idea out of the fog of just being a pretty good idea to a place where even the United States Congress has agreed that there should be an all weather protected harbor at the Head of Passage Canal. They have directed the US Army Corps of Engineers to design a proper breakwater and engineer a proper harbor based upon the information gathered from you, the public, and your harbor workers.

Once that design is complete, the work of configuring the best float system and associated upland support will be up to the City of Whittier, its harbor users and constituents. This would include things such as parking facilities, vessel launch and repair areas, restrooms, camping sites, a fishing lagoon and common parkway for walking and viewing.

I am very excited to be a part of this project. I believe that I will be here to enjoy the fruits of this particular labor. I am hoping that it will be a part of your boating, hiking and camping experience in Prince William Sound, as well. Although some have said that they are not in favor of any further development in this area, they are far outnumbered by those who wish to see a first class facility that will enhance the safety and enjoyment of our area and will offer economic opportunity to those in our community.